

My Father-in-law -- Allen Augustus Hartwell (1870-1958)

My husband's father, Allen Augustus Hartwell ("Granddaddy"), was born on December 31, 1870, in West Somerville, Massachusetts. His most distinguishing characteristics were his red hair and beard; he was also five feet eleven inches tall, medium build, with blue eyes, light complexion, and freckles. Many adjectives could be used to describe him -- active, progressive, loyal, alert, altruistic, devout Methodist, stubborn, great talker, and Republican.

Granddaddy's ancestors were seafaring men, and came from Salem, Massachusetts. His grandfather, Joseph Warren Hartwell, sailed to the Fiji Islands. His family thought he had made an enemy on this trip because during the gold rush of 1849, he was killed by someone unknown. Allen's grandmother, Lydia ^{Parker}~~Brown~~ Hartwell, had to struggle to provide for her four boys. Allen's father, William Henry Hartwell, helped to bring the boys up. I have heard that he was the best one of the lot, and obtained more education than most boys of his time.

Allen's father moved his family to Milford, Massachusetts, and went to work in the post office. He built a large house at 49 Emmons Street. He had barely finished it when he died of pneumonia. So Allen came home from Boston University and took over the reins of the family and his father's job at the post office (Later he went back and got his degree).

Since he and his wife couldn't go to China as missionaries (which was their lifelong dream), he opened a mission in the poorer section of Milford. It must have been a success because it ran for several years.

He also worked and preached in the church. Another of his interests was the lodge of Odd Fellows, which was a powerful group at the time. When I first knew him, he had just been elected state president. He was also delivering mail to the Italian section of Milford at the time. He carried Sunday School papers in hand for the children. They had to have clean hands to receive them. Even if the parents were Catholic, they didn't seem to mind their children having Methodist papers. When Allen retired, they had a real Italian party for him, so he made the grandparents happy by being able to talk with them.

Granddaddy, as he was called by half the adults and all the kids, lived in Durham, New Hampshire, at the apartment house for nine years. During that time, he spoke to just about everyone, and got into conversations with as many people as he could. He had a standard opener -- "Good morning, you look very familiar. Are you a native of New Hampshire?", etc. He made many friends this way.

Granddaddy also did a lot of work in the yard which his son disliked doing. I think we didn't appreciate how lovely he kept the grounds until he was gone.

He visited the Durham schools often and told the children about the eagle as a national emblem. At least 20 years have gone by and many young adults still remember Granddaddy Hartwell.

This little story characterizes Granddaddy very well. He and his wife Alice were riding with friends. She was quiet as always; it was somewhat her nature and the rest the lack of a chance. He turned around and said, "Alice, you will never set the world on fire!" She replied,

"I'm too busy putting out the fires that you start!" He was a fine man
but one that only a saint like Alice could live with.